

MARLENE KADAR

My Grandmother Only

My Grandmother only drank Pride of Arabia 100% arabica coffee in the brown bag from Loblaw's 1950-1965 @ 93 cents a pound.

My grandmother only used Ivory soap. It floated in the tiny Gort Avenue bathtub and that is how we knew it was pure.

My grandmother had machine gun filings in her skin from lucrative wartime work in the munitions factory and the factory doctor said: "use Noxzema on your face, only Noxzema."

She was one of 40,000 women who made bombs for B52s
and sten guns.

Now you are getting it.

My grandmother only used Noxzema skin cream on her face.

After the war my grandmother wrapped her hair in pastel coloured kerchiefs. We picked her up at the steel factory in a grey Hudson at 3:30, when the shift bell howled. We were never late.

Then she unwrapped her hair as we drove to J. I. Case company on Vickers Road where we were the janitors.

We ate supper in my grandfather's cosy office, the boiler room, and then we set out to clean, sweep and polish desk after desk after desk, my little brother and I pretending we were the bosses.

My grandmother's name was Marcela, not Marcella.

Marlene Kadar is a writer in Toronto, and a Professor in Humanities at York University. She is the editor of the poetry collection, The Missing Line.